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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the writers' views on the domains and goals of media studies in different Australian states, and stresses the need to study the relationship between the media systems, products, and culture. An analytical model for teaching television studies is discussed, the aims of which are to: (1) introduce the study in a manner that will engage students' interest and involvement; (2) develop some fundamental understanding of the social function of the media; and (3) enable students to be ultimately independent of teacher guidance and short term props. It is suggested that teaching start with the known, i.e., the narrative; to problematize it by addressing notions of form; to denaturalize the television image by examining codes and conventions; and to apply the concepts developed to representations, such as stereotypes. Throughout, attention is drawn to the ideological underpinnings of the meanings received on television, and various activities are suggested to help students gain long term independence in media interrogation. The method described is characterized as simple, clearly developed from the known (narrative) to the unknown (ideology), and accessible to teachers and students. Appended are examples of student activities. (4 end notes) (CGD)

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AN APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF TELEVISION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Barrie McMahon and Robyn Quin

'Paper Presented to the 1986 Television Studies Conference'

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Increasingly in Australian schools television studies is coming to dominate the Media Studies curriculum. In Western Australia television studies constitutes the major curriculum component of the course for the senior years. The dominant position of television in the Media Studies curriculum is only partly a reflection of the relative low cost and availability of physical resources. More importantly, it reflects the perceived importance of television in the lives of the students. The large urban populations of Australia have had television since 1956. However many country areas still receive either no television or only non-commercial television (seen as inherently positive and unthreatening by parents and educational decision makers.) The introduction of the domestic satellite will mean that for the first time every person in Australia can receive television. The mind boggles at what the nomadic Aborigines of the Western desert will make of some of our more popular quiz shows! Perhaps it is these extremes in cultural impact that have prompted educators to turn to television studies and divert attention away from the more traditional areas of Media Studies, newspapers and film. Regardless of the reasons, the study of television in Australian education systems now seems to be getting the attention it deserves but the nature of the attention is still a contentious issue.

An Overview

A quick look at the syllabuses of the different Australian states shows that a number of different approaches

to the teaching of Media Studies and subsequently television, are in practice. Each education system appears to have attempted to answer the question 'WHAT IS MEDIA STUDIES?' in their own way. The syllabuses exhibit different philosophies, rationales and emphases. Before outlining the approaches around Australia it is worth pausing for a moment to consider the question itself. We feel that any useful answer to the question 'What is Media Studies' must offer a statement as to the proper object of study of the discipline, its theoretical basis and the practical application of such, and an elaboration of its fundamental concepts. This paper will not definitively answer this question. It will however outline the moves (gropings?) we believe we have made towards the answer over the past eleven years.

The Question of Content

At the school level content is still an area of dispute. Course content is determined by a separate state curriculum authority and therefore the curricula of the different states show different emphases. For lack of better descriptive terms we have characterised the major approaches as 'literary', 'innoculative' and 'cultural'. The literary approach approximates what Len Masterman describes in Teaching About Television as the discriminatory approach to the mass media.1 This approach dominates the study of television and in fact all aspects of the mass media when it is encompassed in the study of English. At its most extreme it focuses on works of 'high art' and questions of aesthetic

merit. The literary approach aims to give students a criteria which will enable them to discriminate between the trivial and the worthwhile. The texts used in the English courses exhibit some fairly sophisticated versions of this approach. To quote from one popular text published by the English Teachers' Association:

"Identify the story line and see if it is written to a well-worn formula".

"Can you identify the explicit value in the programme?"

"Does it (the programme) show an awareness that the basis of all drama lies in conflict and that the roots of human conflict must be sought well below the surface of relationships?" 2

The answer lies in the question. Remnants of this approach remain with specialist Media Studies teachers and it is not uncommon to hear teachers actively promoting the viewing of the ABC as a more worthwhile activity than the viewing of the commercial stations. In this manner the literary approach has been modified and become the type of discriminatory approach that Masterman critiques so effectively in Teaching the Media.

The innoculative approach has been widespread in media education as it is practised in the Australian Catholic school system in a course called Television Awareness Training. It can be described as the attempt to build within students a protective shell which will guard them against the evil influences of the media. As is to be expected the study of advertising and television violence and their negative effects figure prominently in this approach. The student workbook

states:

"It is well and truly time that we all started to demand of our government and TV industry a more responsible response to all the information about television violence. It is not enough to say that viewers can turn their sets off. Australian viewers have the right to go one step further and determine the extent and nature of violence depicted on television."3

The approach in the writers' own state of Western Australia and gradually gaining currency in other states is that which takes the view that Media Studies courses should be about the processes of mediation. Specifically this involves a study of how the media works, how the media produces meaning, how the media is organised and the form and functions of the representations offered by the media. The focus is on the relationships between the constructed world presented by the media and the cultural norms, practices, beliefs and attitudes. Some key premises underpin our approach:

The first premise relies upon the most simple definition of the term 'media' - it is that which mediates. The premise is, then, that any medium mediates the 'world out there' or at least an aspect of reality. If the media merely transmits a neutral picture of the world then we would be forced to agree with our critics and abolish the study. Acceptance of the premise that the media actively mediates implies that no medium can be studied in isolation from its social context. To do so would be a trivial activity.

A second and related premise is that the processes of mediation have two dimensions. There is the material, physical

dimension and the social and institutional dimension. The physical dimension demands a study of form and its influence upon content. The social dimension requires study of the context and its role in the determination of content.

Thirdly, we believe the media must be studied as a system. It is a system characterised in Australia by capitalist, oligopolistic patterns of ownership, government control and massive profits. Furthermore it is a system which functions both synchronically and diachronically. At the synchronic level we have the system as it exists at the present time - its forms, organisation, interrelations, products and audiences. Courses and textbooks generally emphasise this aspect of the study of the media. More often ignored however is the study of the media as a diachronic system, that is, as the result of an historical process. The acknowledgement of the impact of the dominant media on the organisation of a society is reflected in the way we categorise cultures. We speak of oral cultures (dominant media is the spoken word), literate cultures (dominant media is the written word)and post literate cultures (dominated by the electronic media). The study of the electronic media must introduce questions about its impact, or possible impact, on thought, social relations and organisation.

The final premise is that the media because it is pervasive and deceptively transparent is ideologically powerful. The distinction between media representations and commonsense views of the world disappear and become as one.

Methodology - Constraints and Limitations

In developing a methodology for the teaching of television based on the approach to Media Studies outlined immediately above certain constraints and limitations have had to be faced. Classroom strategies have been designed to minimise the impact of these limitations.

a. The Environment

The subject based, rigidly timetabled and regulated school is a practical reality. The success of the current 'back to basics' movement in Australia is ensuring that this situation will not change in the foreseeable future. The context within which the teaching about television must take place must be recognised but should not be seen as representing a hopeless position. Media Studies cannot opt out of this system and wait for the schools to change, it must take its place in the present system and work from within. Alvarado's point that it is extremely difficult to "justify students learning to analyse critically one apparatus of the state from within another without at the same time showing how these tools could be applied to a reflexive analysis of their own situation" is acknowledged but not entirely accepted.4 His position seems to ignore the fact that students actively set their TV experiences up against practices of the school. As teachers we tend to treat such oppositional practices as examples of bad behaviour as indeed it is in the context of schooling. After all no female teacher is going to encourage the students to call her 'vinegar tits' (a favourite term for authoritarian teachers derived from the prison warder in the commercial

production Prisoner). Television is not inherently subversive but students can and do use elements of their television experience in their battle against the values of the school.

b. The Teachers

Although this situation is slowly changing many, if not most of the Media Studies teachers do not have specific media training. Whilst the lack of content is certainly a handicap a greater problem is the internalised but unarticulated philosophy that many bring to the subject area. This is particularly a problem with English Literature trained teachers in our state who have been inculcated, often without their knowledge, in the Leavis/Thompson approach to literary studies. It was interesting to note that this same point was made by the Scottish curriculum advisers in their article in the AMES Journal about media teaching in Scotland. The quest for the uplifting moral is quite naturalised within many of our teachers. Many teachers view the media, especially television, as a hostile force acting upon the student. Television and school are seen to be in mutual opposition except for the odd times when a TV programme is seen as "educational" and therefore warrants a slot in the school day. Even those teachers who have more recently graduated with a background in cultural studies and semiotic theory find themselves unable to successfully integrate their theories with classroom practice. This is not simply an inability to teach but a reflection of the lack of a history of successful classroom organisation and practice in media education. The history so far is one of experimentation.

c. **The Teaching and Learning Resources**

Teachers need support materials but the resources must be specific, accessible and easy to implement. Resources must not require abundant teacher knowledge and/or preparation time. If they do they will be unused or misused. Ideally support materials should not be a series of one-offs but rather a coherent programme of work with an achievable and recognisable goal. Many of the resources and strategies presently in use encourage a fragmented approach to the study of the media. For example, a popular media resource in Australian schools is the study kit. In accordance with the best media practice a current media experience is identified and then resources are developed that will teach about that specific television programme or film. Marketing companies are frequently persuaded to fund the project not a difficult task as they receive a huge amount of publicity under the guise of being educational. The kits are usually attractive, entertaining and favoured by teachers because they seem to offer tangible proof that something worthwhile is happening. The problem is that students do not seem to be able to extrapolate from this experience and apply the knowledge to other media experiences. The students understand the specifics but the frameworks that will allow them to transfer the knowledge to new media experiences are not developed.

The average classroom, even in the 'lucky country' does not have access to television sets, video recorders and television studios. Occasional access to a limited supply of equipment is a luxury. Our schools are still locked into a book culture and

it is much easier for students to obtain access to book references, magazines and newspapers than it is to get even the simplest AV resources. Strategies for media education must take account of this situation.

d. Theory and Practice

A theory is useless to a teacher unless it has an analytic method. Any theory of the media must be translatable to an actual practice usable in the classroom. Furthermore the analytical method must have validity in terms of the aims of the course. The first part of this paper outlined the writers views on the domain and goals of media studies and stressed the need to study the relationship between the media systems, the media products and the culture. Therefore it follows that we seek an analytical method that will demonstrate the relationship between the media text and the material life of the students' culture. If an analytical model is to meet this demand it must include an interrogatory dimension that questions the nature of this relationship. The model must question what the media text is doing - reproducing social forms, enforcing or challenging social forms, mystifying or concealing social forms. Obviously these are not mutually exclusive functions.

Secondly and most importantly an analytic model must be accessible. It must be accessible to teachers and this means firstly, being free of jargon as far as possible. There are good arguments for learning the specialised vocabulary of your subject area and recent graduates seem comfortable with the language employed in the disciplines of semiotics and structuralist linguistics. For the great majority of teachers

however the jargon is incomprehensible and therefore threatening. No-one wants to feel inadequate and therefore those who promote the study of the media in schools must do so in a language that is readily understood by their colleagues. Accessibility of the method for teachers also means having some foundation in what they already know. Teachers are no different from anyone else, they need to know that the skills and understandings they possess are worthwhile and applicable to the teaching of Media Studies. An effective and usable analytical method must build upon the teachers' skills.

Accessibility of the method is equally important for students. The arguments about the avoidance of jargon and the necessity of building new understandings on previous knowledge and experience also apply to students. Jargon is a particularly important consideration in that it serves to mystify and one of our major tasks is to demystify the media for students. The analytic method adopted must give students a way of organising the perceptions and understandings about the media that they already possess but at the same time develop new critical skills. Furthermore, an analytic method should be transferable from the school to home and finally to the students' post school days. That is, critical skills must be developed that will survive the end of formal schooling and serve students for the years to follow. It has been the writers' experience that students can talk about the media but their discussion is severely limited by their lack of a vocabulary that will allow them to get past discussions of plot, character and theme. They are unable to discuss a

programme at the level of its construction because they lack the critical skills and language that directs them to such questions. The last aspect of accessibility of the method is its public profile. Those outside the classroom are entitled to reassurance that the time the students are spending in the media studies classroom is worthwhile. In the past we have not always made this clear and have been attacked on the basis that media studies is about playing with equipment and television studies are trivial and time wasting. Perhaps it is time that our methodology is made clear and accessible to all.

ONE APPROACH TO TELEVISION STUDIES

Over the past couple of years we have worked on developing a method of teaching television that would fit comfortably with our philosophy of media education and meet the requirements of clarity and coherence discussed above. What follows is a brief summary of the approach to the teaching of television which we, in Western Australia, are pursuing. It is necessarily incomplete because it is not possible within this paper to explain fully the concepts which are taught or the manner in which they are taught. The general nature of the scope and sequence of the teaching programme should emerge.

Three major aims underpin our method of teaching television. The first aim is to introduce the study in a manner that will not alienate students but which will engage their interest and involvement. The second is to develop some fundamental understandings about the social function of the

media which will be of value when the students confront media products in the future. The third aim is to enable students to be ultimately independent of teacher guidance and short term props such as teaching kits or textbooks. Sufficient interest and competence must be developed in students to ensure that they, as informed citizens, continue to interrogate the media throughout their lives.

Our first aim is to begin where there is some knowledge, some interest and the potential for greater student involvement. A favourite catchcry of our administrators is 'start where the students are at'. We have severe reservations about this maxim, not only about the grammar but about the sentiments because too often 'where they are at' is precisely where they remain. We do concede, however,that students' existing knowledge is a useful and necessary starting point. However it is vital that strategies be developed which take students beyond their existing knowledge.

We would argue that the most useful starting point is the concept of narrative. Both students and teachers are familiar with this concept and the transition to further study can be achieved in a coherent way. We have found that students at middle high school level are familiar with the realist concepts of plot and character from their studies of literature. They are confident in this knowledge and accustomed to discussing television at the informal level in these terms. At the beginning of the course then, we believe that the focus should be the concept of narrative as the fundamental device by which people make sense of experience -

narrative as the framework which people use to establish relationships between events.

Even at this early stage the second aim, of developing student understandings about the social function of the media, can emerge. Narrative as a device for ' making sense of experience' begs the question 'whose experience?' There is a problem here, however. Traditional studies of narrative have fallen short of addressing the relationship between the narratives of a culture and the practices and beliefs of that culture. The divorce between culture and artifact has been so effective that demonstrating interdependence has become the greatest hurdle faced by the media teacher. Although with sustained effort we might nudge students towards an understanding of the myths operating in their favourite police drama there is no guarantee they will recognise those same meanings in other programmes or the presence and function of other myths operating in the media. We may not like it but the process of understanding the ideological constructs of media texts will be long and slow. Indeed we can only hope that we help students begin the process and encourage sufficient enthusiasm so that they will continue the quest throughout life.

The long, slow process of establishing an understanding of ideology is essentially one of denaturalising television's representations of the world. Rather than discussing television narratives in terms of content students can be directed towards the factors influencing that content. Attention should be drawn to the form of television. Students

can examine the implications of television as a domestic medium and as a broadcast medium. Attention can be directed to the ways in which television establishes viewer interest in its products, the technical limitations of the medium, the viewing context, television's relationship with other media and its organisation of its output.

Broadcasting structures, the ramifications of oligopolistic control, the function of advertising and marketing can be introduced in this part of the course. Activity work can direct the students back to the narrative content and require them to examine the influence of the form upon the content. Once the concept of narrative has been opened up to include questions of form students can return, sometimes with encouragement, sometimes on their own initiative to a re-examination of their knowledge in the light of new understandings.

Concepts of the stereotype can be introduced at this point. Students can be steered away from the traditional literary notion of a stereotype as simply a cardboard cutout and guided towards analysis of the social context of stereotypes. Students will be confronting the issue of representation but will have some difficulty because they will have an inadequate language with which to deal with the social context.

It is appropriate at this point to give specific attention to the codes and conventions of television. The study of codes and conventions will open up the link between audience, text and culture. It will also provide students with

the language to discuss these representations. Generally student attention has not been directed during their earlier schooling to such notions as the fact that body language is largely culturally generated; that the meaning of colours may vary from culture to culture; that what we see means something because of our cultural experience.

We have found that it is convenient for study purposes to group the various codes, fairly arbitrarily, into the technical (codes of image construction), symbolic (codes of visual depiction), audio and written codes. These should not, however, be treated in isolation but in terms of their patterns of selection and organisation. Students can be asked to re-examine the content of television as a coded representation of reality. We have found this an important strategy in the process of denaturalising the media. As an example, we will return for the moment to the concept of stereotypes. An understanding of representation should enable students to advance beyond 'spot the stereotype' knowledge. Knowledge that culture generates meaning allows students to speculate about the manner in which one group can convey meaning about another group through recourse to the codes of construction.

It can be seen that increasingly the emphasis is upon the ideological dimensions of television. As the issue becomes increasingly central the stage is reached where it has to be specifically addressed. When developing material for television studies we agonised at length over the desirability of including a section on ideology. We were aware of all the

difficulties but felt that to avoid the issue would mean that we were ignoring our key premise - that the study of the media is the study of the relationship between the media's representation of the world and the culture of which it is a part. Necessary concepts in the treatment of ideology are the concepts of preferred readings, dominant ideology, naturalisation and myth. Now that these concepts have been included in media courses and texts perhaps they will in turn become naturalised and thus not attract attack from vested interest groups.

If students have reached the stage where they are ready to confront directly the ideological dimensions of the mass media they are a long way towards long term independence. It then becomes relatively easy for them to address more complex aspects of media study such as genre. They can, for instance, examine the way in which television genre shape particular meanings in particular ways.

We cannot ever say for certain whether our third concern, the independence of the student in the process of media interrogation has been reached but there are some pointers. How the student goes about investigating new challenges such as genre study will give some indication. If a student reverts to a focus upon aesthetic or other supposedly apolitical approaches success has not yet been attained. Other approaches, other ways of denaturalising and making problematic the study will need to be developed.

In summary then we are suggesting a useful strategy is to start with the known - narrative; to problematise it by

addressing notions of form; to denaturalise the television images by examining the codes and conventions; and to apply the concepts developed to representations such as stereotypes. Throughout, increased attention is being drawn to the ideological underpinnings of the meanings we receive on television, for unless there is comprehension at this level the student will not be in a position to gain long term independence in media interrogation.

The classroom activities designed to teach the concepts in the approach do not require sophisticated resources. For the most part the activities require no more than a pen, paper and occasional access to a television monitor. Activities can vary - we advocate viewing and discussion sessions, data collection and analysis, image analysis, library research, oral and written responses and practical work. Production work always presents the problems of equipment, time management and skills instruction. Nevertheless we still favour students doing some practical work believing that it provides the opportunity for students to interact with the media with minimum mediation on the part of the teacher. Some examples of the types of student activities used in our course will be found in the appendix.

The strengths of the method are its simplicity, its clear development from the known - narrative, to the unknown - ideology, and the accessibility of the method for both teachers and students. We believe that the clarity and coherence of the approach will facilitate the transference of learning, that students will be able to use this approach to

future. The sequence of tasks is clear and methodical and the aim - understanding the ideological dimension of television is kept clearly in view at all times. In order to hold to the aim the relationship between the media and the social context should be foregrounded at all times. In the early stages this relationship is questioned in terms of the ways in which television stories are constructed. When students come to the study of the language of television emphasis is placed upon the relationship between cultural values and the symbolic codes. In the final section students are asked to apply their understandings of codes and value systems to wider questions about the nature of the relationship between the media texts and social practices and beliefs.

We believe the major lack in the approach is the absence of a historical dimension. The approach is geared to the study of the contemporary media system and does not direct students towards an understanding of the significance of the media in terms of the history of communications or the historical-social impact of different media. If the aims of Media Studies as outlined earlier in this paper are to be met this omission must be rectified. Another possible criticism is that the approach could be a form of indoctrination towards a particular political position. Whilst we accept the former historical deficiency as valid we reject the charge of indoctrination. To lead students towards an understanding of ideological constructs is to give them more power, more independence in the formation of their judgements. There is clearly a strong value judgement on our part here but one for

which we make no apology.

Endnotes

1. Masterman, L., Teaching About Television, MacMillan, 1980.

2. Dwyer, B., 'Mass Media Activities' in English in Secondary Schools Today and Tomorrow, English Teachers Association Ashfield, 1977, pp.423-8

3. Television Awareness Training, Television: A New Look For Viewers, Mediacom Associates Inc., 1982, p.39

4. Alvarado,M., 'Teaching_Television' Screen Education 31, Summer 19979, p.28

APPENDIX

This material comes from Real Images: Film and Television, a text written for Australian schools by the authors of this paper. Some examples of the student activites referred to in the paper are included as well as a diagrammatic summary of the approach to television teaching discussed in the body of the paper.

Exercise 12.C Restrictions on narrative

The settings of television shows are usually very limited and repeated every week. Budget restrictions and time would make it very difficult to build elaborate sets for each new show.
[*Special equipment: drawing materials*]

1 As the director/producer of a new television series you are planning such details as the sets. Budget requirements limit you to four permanent sets. You will occasionally be able to build others as the story requires but these four will provide the basis of your action. The series outline tells you that the show is about a family of two parents and twin daughters. It is a situation comedy built around the funny situations the twin teenage daughters get themselves into with their boyfriends. Mother is a housewife, father is a doctor.

2 Outline in detail (or draw if you are able) the four sets you would choose to have built.

Work within these limitations:

- A family meeting place where all the characters can come together
- A place where the girls can be seen alone
- A place where new characters can be introduced
- A place where we can see the mother and the father in relation to their occupations
- A place the girls can go to with their boyfriends.

3 Discuss with others in your group, or with your teacher:

- The potential that these sets provide for plot development. What sorts of plots are possible? What should be ruled out (for example, fire)?
- What occasional characters would be appropriate in these settings?
- What objects, artifacts could be included in the settings to further enlighten us about the lead characters?

Television's Narrative

Exercise 13.A The television close-up

Close-ups on television are the norm rather than the exception. The drama is advanced through use of close-ups, unlike in film where the close-up is reserved for the most dramatic moments.

Here is a series of stills from *Days of Our Lives*. The dialogue is paraphrased under each still.

1 Compared with film, which codes retain their importance when the close-up is used so persistently? Which codes become less important?

2 To what extent can the narrative be understood through the images? How important are the words?

3 *The Young and the Restless* goes to air five days each week. How does this coded system help producers and performers meet such a heavy schedule?

4 To what extent is the claim that this sort of television is 'radio with a few pictures' justified?

She: David, darling, you don't ever have to pay us back for that. We did it because we loved you and we wanted you to be free.

He: I am going to pay back all my debts. I know how much money you spent trying to get me cleared.

He: Very careless of you. My son must have had a valid reason for not granting you that divorce.

She: You know Tony only married me to get American citizenship, and he only stayed married to me all this time so that it would come in handy some day, and needless to say that day arrived.

Television's Codes

Exercise 11.B Segmentation

Television dramas are usually divided into segments. This allows the domestic viewer to concentrate for shorter periods of time on one aspect of the drama. Sometimes the segments are developed quite separately from each other, and the action associated with each only coincides in the final segment. [*Special equipment: television monitor, video replay equipment, access to an episode of a TV series*]

1 View an episode of a television series (for example, *Minder*, *Hill Street Blues*).

2 Identify the segments — those sections of the story that seem to have fairly self-contained characters and locations. This will be easier if you present the segments visually.

3 To what extent do we depend upon a fore-knowledge of the main characters for the segments to make some sense as a complete story?

4 British television series often contain a pub segment. Pub life is a feature of British life, but the pub segment is more than just a reflection of British life style. The pub scene is a very useful (and cheap) segment. What advantages and possibilities does a pub segment give creators of the series?

5 Segments are most noticeable on television. A film tends to be a more cohesive unit. Is there any indication that some form of segmentation occurs in film? Use examples to justify your answer.

Scenes from *Minder*: The pub segment

The visit segment

The garage segment

The apartment segment

Exercise 15.A Ideology

Ideology is a mixture of theories, ideas, habits and activities that shapes our perceptions of the world.

1 View the photograph and read the article about *Young Talent Time*.
What ideologies are suggested? Consider:
- The body language, clothing of the children
- The appearance and role of the compere (described in the text)
- The occasion, which is the 600th show of *Young Talent Time*.

2 If you know anything about this or similar shows, by using this knowledge, expand upon the outline you have made.

3 Discuss with your teacher the similarities and differences between this ideology and the ideologies that were earlier identified with school.

Ideology

variety in student work - Television Form

Analysis and research

1 a Analyse in detail one television news programme. Identify all of the ways in which a sense of 'immediacy' is injected into the programme. Consider:
- The regular features such as introduction, newsreader's opening lines, station identification.
- The characters — newsreader/s, reporters. How do they deliver their lines? Consider the various codes.
- The individual stories. How recent? How topical? How visual?

b Television news contains segments, then segments within segments. Identify the segments and sub-segments within a news programme. Are any of the sub-segments more likely to appeal to particular members of the family audience? Although segments can be identified, efforts are made to link them together. What devices are used to link the segments?

c How do television companies create a narrative image about their news programmes?

Library research

2 Many of television's programme genres have been drawn from radio rather than film. This is not surprising as they are both broadcast media. News, soap operas and quiz shows are only a few examples.
- Research in your library and then try to outline a typical evening's radio programme *before* television became a household medium. (If you have difficulty in obtaining the information in the library, ask some of the middle-aged and elderly members of the community. You will be surprised how much detail they can provide about programmes and time slots.)
- Compare your constructed radio programme with an evening's television programme.
- If it is possible, take the comparison further so that weekday and weekend radio and television programmes can be compared.
- Write or discuss in detail the similarities in pre-television radio programming and modern television planning. How do you account for these similarities and differences?

3 Cable television is an alternative to broadcast television in some parts of the world, particularly in North America.

Research in your library to find out as much as you can about cable television — the sorts

Written response

1 'He-who has the bigger stick has the better chance of imposing his definition of reality.' (Berger and Luckmann)

To what extent does this statement impose its own definition of reality, that is, how is it shaping meaning in a specific direction?

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement?

2 What is meant by dominant ideology? How useful is the term in explaining how meaning is created in television? Does the concept mean that there can be only one meaning created and interpreted? Who develops a dominant ideology?

Variety in student work - Content

Practical exercise

Here are the written guidelines for a Western television series, *Bonanza*.

These "rules" for *Bonanza* writers appeared in Nancy Vogel, "'Bonanza' Scripts," *Writer's Digest*, Vol. 48, No. 12 (December 1968), 62–64, 93, 95.

1. Absolutely no railroad stories, or yarns which require mine interiors, floods, blizzards or fires.

2. Because of the color requirements, exterior night shots should be avoided if possible, with the exception of the Ponderosa ranch house and barn, which are located on stage.

3. Stories must *always* deeply involve the Cartwrights. We do not want the Cartwrights "looking in" on the problems of someone else. At times we have used, and will continue to use, guest stars of considerable stature, but when we do the problem is still to be a Cartwright problem and the solution a Cartwright solution.

4. The Cartwrights must never be cast as "do-gooders." In other words, the problem should never become a Cartwright problem merely by having the Cartwrights push their way into it.

5. We often have a surfeit of Indian stories. Forget, too, any stories concerning a "wife" showing up, or someone claiming to own the Ponderosa, or the young, misunderstood rebel who regenerates because of the Cartwrights' tolerance and example.

6. We have many stories submitted in which the townspeople "turn against" the Cartwrights. Unless the story is truly unique and believable, this area should be avoided. The Cartwrights are too intelligent in their behavior, too respected and too prominent to have such a thing happen.

7. What we do want is Western action and Western adventure, concerning a worthy and dramatic problem for the Cartwrights, and strong opponents. We want human drama built around a specific locale and specific period in the country's history; simple, basic stories as seen through the eyes of Ben, Hoss, and Little Joe Cartwright, and Candy.

1 Refer to the section 'A problem posed' at the start of this chapter.

2 Given the information that you have gained from this chapter, develop the spy series outlined in 'A problem posed'.

3 When you have thought out the details about character and setting, create a set of written guidelines for your spy series.

4 In order to help your writers understand the narrative image of your series, collect a portfolio of images (sets and characters) that are appropriate for your series. Make the appropriate notes underneath.

Chapter 12

Television Content

A problem posed

As a television producer, you have been given the out-takes (leftovers) of a spy film. You now have to create a spy series by using the out-takes for novelty and studio sets as the consistent images. How many sets can you afford if you are working within the parameters of a 'normal' budget? What instructions will you give to your script writers about the sets? What are the sets? How are they to be used? What are your instructions to the script writers regarding character development? What can and cannot happen to the characters?

Summary of Strategies